

US Fish and Wildlife Service
Northern Spotted Owl Timber Harvest Plan Technical Assistance
“Red Flag” List—Interior

February 27, 2008

During the US Fish and Wildlife Service-Cal Fire Timber Harvest Plan Technical Assistance meeting on 2/13/2008, questions arose from Cal Fire staff regarding issues (aka “red flags”) to be aware of while reviewing the plans in relation to northern spotted owls (NSO). The following are the “red flags” for NSO in the Interior.

Timber Harvest Proposals Within Northern Spotted Owl Home Ranges:

- **Harvest within 0.5 mile of Activity Center – likely to result in take at many Activity Centers because of previous reductions in habitat quality/quantity.**
- Activity Center not plotted correctly based on best available information
- Habitat post harvest does not match silvicultural prescription
 - Specifically, Alternative Harvest is rarely suitable for NSOs post harvest

California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) NSO Reports:

- Reports not submitted with Technical Assistance (TA) request
- Recent version of Reports not submitted with TA request
- 1.3 mile area surrounding Timber Harvest Plan (THP) only partially searched in database query
- Activity center locations deviate from CDFG database, with no previous TA letter from Service to support deviation
- Contact not made with adjacent landowners that do not regularly submit data to CDFG for inclusion in NSO database
- TA requestor states that activity center is abandoned or not valid, with no previous TA letter from Service to support claim

Surveys:

- Survey stations do not cover all suitable habitat within 0.7 mile of harvest unit(s).
- Survey stations skipped without an explanation as to why
- If more than one surveyor, surveyors should not be able to hear each other
- Surveys less than 5 days apart, especially with one-year six-visit protocol
- Surveys not spread over 2-3 months
- Surveys not meeting June 30th requirement (2 of three visits or 4 of six visits conducted before June 30th) due to snow or other access issues not identified
- Surveys start before sunset (applies to driving routes, not walk-in surveys)
- Follow up visits not adequate with respect to duration of survey and/or area searched
 - Area searched not consistent with night response location
 - Follow up conducted from road as opposed to hiking into response location

- Follow up conducted in the middle of the day (ideally follow ups should occur in early morning or late afternoon)
- Duration of follow up too short to adequately cover response area and suitable habitat adjacent to response area
- Additional visit(s) not conducted when NSOs are heard at night, but not located on follow up visit (see NSO survey protocol, page 10, for more information).
- Determinations made with regard to pair or nesting status based on too little information or poor survey effort
- Lumping potentially “new” activity center detections with a known activity center greater than 0.5 mile away
 - Example: Known activity center SIS0001 identified in CDFG Reports. Surveys detect NSO(s) 0.7 mile from historic SIS0001 activity center location. Plan submitter identifies the detections from recent surveys as belonging to SIS0001, when the recent survey detections may actually represent a new activity center

Habitat Analysis:

- Discrepancy in habitat typing as compared to aerial photographs or equivalent imagery
- Recent harvest of adjacent THP(s) not depicted
- Approved THPs that have not been harvested within the same NSO 1.3 mile radius territory currently under review are not accounted for in habitat analysis